

which is what i suppose
john thomas was getting at
when he pointed out that
the difference between painters & poets
is that the latter
do not have to
keep their hands still

ATASCADERO

comfortable new tract
he doesn't plant dichondra
or gravel but grapes chilis
everything from artichokes to zucchini
thrive he makes his own
beer grows the largest
begonias i've ever seen
seems honestly happy
riding his bike to work
dispensing medication at
the state mental hospital

THE FATHER POEM

i didn't know him very well
he & my mother split up
when i was 8 or 9 or 10
and for the next few years
i only saw him
when he came to town
once a year at the capri motel
next to the LA airport
then i moved out
& even that stopped

i was 22 or 23
when i next heard from him
a letter hastily written
on half a sheet of paper
dear kirk it said
i guess i haven't been much
of a father
& perhaps i've developed
a jaundiced attitude toward things
but i've tried to do
what i thought
i had to do

i mentioned the letter
to my mother
he's just got jaundice
she said
from all his drinking

i meant to go see him
or at least write
but i was moving around a lot
running from the draft
& never did

it was about 4 years
after that letter
that they found him
in his old clunker
in santa ana
as dead as the battery

RUNNING LOW

-- for jack kerouac

realizing that i have lived
at least 15 different places
in 3 states
over the past 8 years
not counting the trips
to here & there
and now feeling tired running low
but still not feeling
i'm in the right place
the chosen one & once again feeling
like moving on i remember
jack moving west in a train
with everyone outside reading on the road
wondering just how and why and
where he'd missed the exit
not knowing how far it is
to the next one not knowing why
there never seemed to be a place
with enough space to stop
for a while
the shoulder of the road
barely wide enough to pull over
for a piss stop